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142 hills, and if one met them in the plains one would not be able to distinguish them from the ordinary Kachari or Rabha. The nose in the Khasi is somewhat depressed, the nostrils being often large and prominent. The forehead is broad and the
141 space between the eyes is often considerable. The skull may be said to be almost brachy-cephalic, the average cephalic index of 77 Khasi subjects, measured by Col. Waddell and Major Hare, I.M.S., being as high as 77·3 and 77·9, respectively. According to these data the Khasis are more brachy-cephalic than the Aryans, whose measurements appear in Crooke's tables, more brachy-cephalic than the 100 Mundas whose measurements appear in Risley's tables, more brachy-cephalic than the Dravidians, but less brachy-cephalic than the Burmans, whose measurements also appear in Crooke's tables. It would be interesting to compare some head measurements of Khasis with Japanese, but unfortunately the necessary data are not available in the case of the latter people. The Khasi head
142 may be styled sub-brachy-cephalic. Eyes are of medium size, in colour black or brown. In the Jaintia Hills hazel eyes are not uncommon, especially amongst females. Eyelids are somewhat obliquely set, but not so acutely as in the Chinese and some other Mongols. Jaws frequently are prognathous, mouth large, with sometimes rather thick lips. Hair black, straight, and
302 worn long, the hair of people who adopt the old style being caught up in a knot at the back. Some males cut the hair short with the exception of a single lock at the back, which is called *u niuhtrong* or *u niuh-' iawbei* (i.e. the grandmother's lock.) The forepart of the head is often shaven. It is quite the exception to see a beard, although the moustache is not infrequently worn. The Lynngams pull out the hairs of the moustache with the exception of a few hairs on either side of the upper lip.

PHYSICAL AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

142 The Khasis are usually short in stature, with bodies well
[147] nourished, and the males are extremely muscular. The trunk is long in proportion to the rest of the body, and broad at the waist; calves are very highly developed. The women when

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000 461 333 335 which are not found usually in the people of India. He is not above manual labour, and even the Khasi clerk in the Government offices is quite ready to take his turn at the hoe in his potato garden. The men make excellent stonemasons and carpenters, and are ready to learn fancy carpentry and 276 804 mechanical work. They are inveterate chewers of *supari* and the pan leaf (when they can get the latter), both men, women, and children; distances in the interior being often measured by the number of betel-nuts that are usually chewed on a 273 journey. They are not addicted usually to the use of opium or other intoxicating drugs. They are, however, hard drinkers, and consume large quantities of spirit distilled from rice or millet. Rice beer is also manufactured; this is used not only as a beverage, but also for ceremonial purposes. Spirit drinking is confined more to the inhabitants of the high plateaux and to the people of the Wár country, the Bhois and Lynngams 276 being content to partake of rice beer. The Mikirs who inhabit 751 what is known as the "Bhoi" country, lying to the north of the district, consume a good deal of opium, but it must be remembered that they reside in a malarious *terai* country, and that the use of opium, or some other prophylactic, is probably 525 beneficial as a preventive of fever. The Khasis, like other people of Indo-Chinese origin, are much addicted to gambling. 577 The people, and especially those who inhabit the Wár country, are fond of litigation. Col. Bivar remarks, "As regards truthfulness the people do not excel, for they rarely speak the truth unless to suit their own interests." Col. Bivar might have confined this observation to the people who live in the larger centres of population, or who have been much in contact with the denizens of the plains. The inhabitants of the far interior are, as a rule, simple and straightforward people, and are quite as truthful and honest as peasants one meets in other countries. My impression is that the Khasis are not less truthful certainly than other Indian communities. McCosh, writing in 1837, speaks well of the Khasis. The following is his opinion of them:—"They are a powerful, athletic race of men, rather below the middle size, with a manliness of gait and demeanour. They are fond of their mountains, and look down with contempt upon the degenerate race of the

• [147]

1/1 [the Khasi -- Anal/pt]

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limestone caves and underground water-courses on the southern face of the hills. This series contains coal-beds, e.g. the Cherra field and that at Lakadong in the Jaintia Hills. Some description of the remarkable Kyllang Rock may not be out of place. Sir Joseph Hooker describes it as a dome of red granite, 5,400 feet above sea level, accessible from the north and east, but almost perpendicular to the southward where the slope is 80° for 600 feet. The elevation is said by Hooker to be 400 feet above the mean level of the surrounding ridges and 700 feet above the bottom of the valleys. The south or steepest side is encumbered with enormous detached blocks, while the north is clothed with forests containing red tree-rhododendrons and oaks. Hooker says that on its skirts grows a "white bushy rhododendron," which he found nowhere else. There is, however, a specimen of it now in the Shillong Lake garden. Numerous orchids are to be found in the Kyllang wood, notably a beautiful white one, called by the Khasis *u'tiw kyllang synrai*, which blooms in the autumn. The view from the top of the rock is very extensive, especially towards the north, where a magnificent panorama of the Himalayas is obtained in the autumn. The most remarkable phenomenon of any kind in the country is undoubtedly the enormous quantity of rain which falls at Cherrapunji.* Practically the whole of the rainfall occurs in the rains, i.e. from May to October. The remainder of the district is less rainy. The climate of the central plateau of the Shillong range is very salubrious, but the low hills in parts of the district are malarious. The effect of the different climates can at once be seen by examining the physique of the inhabitants. The Khasis who live in the high central plateaux are exceptionally healthy and strong, but those who live in the unhealthy "Bhoi country" to the north, and in the Lyngngam portion to the west of the district, are often stunted and sickly. Not so, however, the Wars who live on the southern slopes, for although their country is very hot at certain times of the year, it does not appear to be abnormally unhealthy except in certain

* The average rainfall at the Cherrapunji Police Station during the last twenty years, from figures obtained from the office of the Director of Land Records and Agriculture, has been 440 inches. The greatest rainfall registered in any one year during the period was in 1896, when it amounted to 641 inches.

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villages, such as Shella, Borpunji, Umniuh, and in Narpuh in the Jaintia Hills.

Origin.

The origin of the Khasis is a very vexed question. Although it is probable that the Khasis have inhabited their present abode for at any rate a considerable period, there seems to be a fairly general belief amongst them that they originally came from elsewhere. The Rev. H. Roberts, in the introduction to his Khasi Grammar, states that "tradition, such as it is, connects them politically with the Burmese, to whose king they were up to a comparatively recent date rendering homage, by sending him an annual tribute in the shape of an axe, as an emblem merely of submission." Another tradition points out the north as the direction from which they migrated, and Sylhet as the terminus of their wanderings, from which they were ultimately driven back into their present hill fastnesses by a great flood, after a more or less peaceful occupation of that district. It was on the occasion of this great flood, the legend runs, that the Khasi lost the art of writing, the Khasi losing his book whilst he was swimming at the time of this flood, whereas the Bengali managed to preserve his. Owing to the Khasis having possessed no written character before the advent of the Welsh missionaries, there are no histories as is the case with the Ahoms of the Assam Valley, and therefore no record of their journeys. Mr. Shadwell, the oldest living authority we have on the Khasis, and one who has been in close touch with the people for more than half a century, mentions a tradition amongst them that they originally came into Assam from Burma *viâ* the Patkoi range, having followed the route of one of the Burmese invasions. Mr. Shadwell has heard them mention the name Patkoi as a hill they met with on their journey. All this sort of thing is, however, inexpressibly vague. In the chapter dealing with "Affinities" have been given some reasons for supposing that the Khasis and other tribes of the Mon-Anam family, originally occupied a large portion of the Indian continent. Where the actual cradle of the Mon-Anam race was, is as

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There are also syntactical agreements. We may take it as finally proved by Dr. Grierson and Professor Kuhn that the Mon-Khmêr, Palaung, Wa, and Khasi languages are closely connected. In the section of the Monograph which deals with language some striking similarities between the languages of these tribes will be pointed out. We have not so far been able to discover social customs common to the Palaungs and the Khasis; this is probably due to the conversion of the Palaungs to Buddhism, the change in the religion of the people having possibly caused the abandonment of the primitive customs of the tribe. In a few years' time, if the progressive rate of conversions of Khasis to Christianity continues, probably the greater number of the Khasi social customs will have disappeared and others will have taken their place, so that it cannot be argued that because no manifest social customs can now be found common to the Khasis and the Palaungs, there is no connection between these two tribes. The strong linguistic affinity between these two peoples and the wild *Was* of Burma points to an intimate connection between all three in the past. As knowledge of the habits of the wild *Was* improves, it is quite possible that social customs of this tribe may be found to be held in common with the Khasis. With regard to social affinities it will be interesting to note the Palaung folk-tale of the origin of their Sawbwa, which is reproduced in Sir George Scott's Upper Burma Gazetteer. The Sawbwa, it is related, is descended from the Naga Princess Thusandi who lived in the *Nat* tank on the Mongok hills and who laid three eggs, from one of which was born the ancestor of the Palaung Sawbwa. Here we see how the Palaung regards the egg, and it is noteworthy that the Khasis lay great stress on its potency in divination for the purposes of religious sacrifices, and that at death it is placed on the stomach of the deceased and is afterwards broken at the funeral pyre. Amongst some of the tribes of the Malay Archipelago also the *Gaji-Guru* or medicine-man "can see from the yolk of an egg, broken whilst sacramentally counting from one to seven, from what illness a man is suffering and what has caused it." Here we have an almost exactly parallel case to the Khasi custom of egg-breaking.

In the Palaung folk-tale above referred to the importance of

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considering. Some of the leading characteristics of the Lyngams will now be detailed. The Lyngams are by complexion swarthy, with features of Mongolian type. The men are of middle height and the women remarkably short, both sexes being not nearly so robust as the Khasis, a result due probably to climatic influences, for the Lyngams live in fever-haunted jungles. The men have very little hair about the face, although a scanty moustache is sometimes seen, the hairs in the centre being carefully plucked out, the result being two tufts on either side. Beards are never seen. The women are ill-favoured, and wear very little clothing. The men wear the sleeveless coat of the Khasi and Mikir pattern, called *phong-marong*, which is made of cotton dyed red, blue, and white. This custom may have been borrowed from the Khasis. They do not grow their own cotton, but obtain it from the plains. They make their own dyes, *changlong* (red) and *hur sai-iong* (black). A cotton cloth, barely enough for purposes of decency, is tied between the legs, the ends being allowed to hang down in front and behind. Sometimes an apron is worn in front. At the present day the men wear knitted woollen caps, generally black or red, of the Nongstoin pattern (a sort of fisherman's cap), but the elderly men and head-men wear turbans. The females wear a cotton cloth about eighteen inches broad round the loins, sometimes striped red and blue, but more often only dark blue. A blue or red cloth is thrown loosely across the shoulders by unmarried girls, but married women only wear the waist-cloth, like the Garos. A cloth is tied round the head by married women, sometimes, Garo fashion. The women wear quantities of blue beads as necklaces, like their Garo sisters. They obtain the beads from the Garo markets at the foot of the hills. Brass ear-rings are worn by both sexes; the women, like the Garos, load their ears to such an extent with brass rings as to distend the lobes greatly. Silver armlets are worn by the head-men only, or by those who possess the means to give a great feast to the villagers. This is the custom of the Garo *nokmas*, or head-men. Both sexes wear bracelets. The men also wear necklaces of beads. The rich wear necklaces of cornelian and another stone which is thought by the Lyngams to be valuable. A necklace of such stones is called *u'pieng blei* (god's necklace).

19: Assam G-5 (1958) 1963 AR7 Khasi AR7

243 on from October to December. For millets the seed is sown in April-May and reaped about six months later. Maize is usually sown in
244 April-May and ripens in August - September. For potato, generally three crops are raised in the district ; the first is sown in December-January and harvested in April-May, the second is sown in February-March and is gathered in June-July and the third is sown in July-August and is harvested in November-December.

245 For oranges and betelnut the orchards are cleared of weeds twice a year. Harvesting of orange takes place from October to January. Betelnut ripens at the beginning of the year and are collected between February and May.

241 **2.6.3 Agricultural implements.**—The usual agricultural implements are a hoe, a sickle, three or four kinds of doas, a harrow, a crowbar which is used for the construction of irrigation channels, 'sierras' and winnowing baskets. Bullock drawn plough is used in wet paddy cultivation in parts of Jowai subdivision and in Bhoi area and resembles the one in use in the plains of the State.

2. 6. 4. **General cultural practices.**—The cultivators mostly adhere to their indigenous practices of cultivation. Rotation of crops is not widely used. Cultivation of rice is usually done by broadcasting the seeds though transplanting is also in vogue in some areas. Mixed cropping is widely practised. Cultivation by making terraces in the hill slopes is gaining popularity in the district.

433 326 323 285 304 286 171 65 231 **2.7 Cottage Industries.**—Cottage Industries, it appears, have not found very great favour among the people of the district. A few families here and there manufacture iron implements, earthenware, pottery, baskets, mats and jewellery. In striking contrast with other districts weaving of cotton clothes is rare among the Khasis. The Mikirs in Bhoi area and in areas adjoining North Cachar and Mikir Hills practice it only for their domestic consumption. At present, the Government is trying to popularise weaving in the district and this has been welcomed by the Khasis. Among other cottage industries production of eri cocoon in the northern part of the district adjoining Kamrup district and bee keeping throughout the district are worth mentioning.

142 147 441 563 **2.8 The People.**—The Khasis and Jaintias are a short sturdy race distinct from the neighbouring hill tribes. By nature they are hardy and laborious and in respect of manual labour, they are free from any inhibition. Side by side with the Khasis live the Mikirs, Garos and Nepalis who form respectively 7.32 percent, 3.38 percent and 3·27 per cent of the total rural population. Besides, there are plains people who are mainly concentrated in the town of Shillong. In the marketing centres of the border area there are a large number of Bengali Hindus who dominate the bulk of the trade in the border areas.

241 433 461 **2.9 Occupation.**—The greater portion of the population of the district subsists on cultivation. More than 75 percent of the rural households are predominantly agricultural. The industrious Khasi agriculturists males and females have a high regard for hard labour

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women from the Wár country, wearing their picturesque dress, amongst whom was the wife of the Siem of Bohwal with her little daughter. The dance was a pretty sight, and I have seldom seen such evidence of unaffected happiness as was exhibited by the people on this occasion. Dancing may be described as one of the characteristic features of Khasi life.

The Synteng *Beh-dieng-khlam* festival takes place annually at Jowai and elsewhere in the Jaintia Hills in the deep water moon month (*u Jyllieu*, or June). *Khlam* is the Khasi word for plague or pestilence, and *beh-dieng* signifies to drive away with sticks. The festival may be described as follows:—The males rise betimes on the day fixed and beat the roof with sticks, calling upon the plague-demon to leave the house. Having done this, later on in the day they go down to the stream where the goddess "Aitan" dwells. Then poles of great length, which have been newly cut, are held across the stream. The people jump on the poles and try to break them; when they succeed in doing so, a great shout is given. After all these poles have been broken, a very large pole is fixed across the stream. The people then divide themselves into two parties, and contend for the possession of the tree. The contest, however, is a good-humoured one, and although many buffets are given and received, these are not regarded seriously, and there are seldom any fights. Col. Bivar says the contending villagers, in their excitement, sometimes relapse into a state of almost complete nudity. The party which succeeds in obtaining possession of this post is supposed to gain health and prosperity during the coming year. Col. Bivar remarks that the origin of this so-called ceremony is said to be that the god of thunder, "*u'lei pyrthat*," and Ka Aitan, the goddess of the stream, enjoined its performance. Many innovations, however, have crept in. People disguise themselves as giants and wild beasts, they also parade images of serpents, elephants, tigers, peacocks, &c. Dancing is carried on with enthusiasm by the males, the girls, clad in their best attire, remaining on-lookers. Before the meeting breaks up the males play a sort of game of hockey with wooden balls.

9: Godwin-Austen G-3 (no date) 1872 AR7 Khasi AR7

On the STONE MONUMENTS *of the* KHASI HILL TRIBES, *and on some of the Peculiar Rites and Customs of the People.* By Major H. H. GODWIN-AUSTEN, F.R.G.S., Deputy Superintendent Topographical Survey of India.

121 THE increasing interest that is taken at the present day in ethnology and the history of man in past and present ages, more particularly in the customs of semi-civilised races in distant quarters of the world as compared with the state of those races who dwelt in Europe in early historic times, has led me to put together the information I obtained regarding the people of the Khāsi Hill tracts. Their customs are peculiar, and the fact that they are among the very few who erect at the present day monolithic monuments, is alone of great interest.

122 This has not escaped the attention of different travellers, officers of the Indian service and others who have visited that quarter of the Bengal Presidency, and from time to time papers have been published; these are scattered through a number of periodicals, and in no case is a complete record of these Hill people to be found.

Notices on the Garos and Khāsis, as well as many of the other tribes on the north-eastern frontier of Bengal, are generally very short, in some instances mislead, and in some cases do the peo- 152 ple, savages though they be, but little justice; in truth, there is very much to admire in these Hill people, they are in many ways, socially and physically, far above their Bengāli neighbours of the plains; intercourse with them is, in consequence, much pleasanter, easier, and has far greater interest; innate honesty and truth in their manners of dealing often crop out, more especially in villages well within the hills, where contact with the people of the plains is of rare occurrence.

101 I shall notice the best of these papers having reference to tribes inhabiting the range of hills running west to east, south of Assam, from the sharp southern bend of the Brahmaputra up to the Kopili and Diyung river, in long. 92 deg. 45 min., a length of some one hundred and sixty-five miles.

114 In the "Asiatic Researches," vol. iii, published so far back as 113 1792, is a very interesting paper on the Gāros, by Mr. John Eliot; his travels, however, did not extend so far to the east as the Khāsias.

The Rev. A. B. Lish, a missionary of Cherra Poonjee, published an account of the Khāsias in the "Calcutta Christian Observer" for 1838, he gives an account of their mode of breaking eggs for omens, etc.

Neither in M'Cosh's "Topography of Assam," or in Robinson's "Assam," is any newer or better information afforded concerning